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Attention Mrs. Mullett
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EXCISE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Washington, D.C. 20520

S/S-13270

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
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September 1, 1969

SECRET

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. HENRY A. KISSINGER
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Coup in Libya

Since the Sitrep this morning there has been relatively little change in the security situation, with the new regime still apparently in fairly firm control and maintaining a strict curfew. However, a late report from the British suggests that fighting may have broken out in Benghazi. Americans and American installations still seem to be in no imminent danger. Radio Cairo has announced Egyptian recognition of the new regime and reports also that it has been recognized by Iraq.

Perhaps the most significant development from our point of view has been the reaction of King Idris, caught vacationing in Turkey. Through the British Embassy in Ankara, the King has appealed for British intervention "to restore order in Libya" and has dispatched a personal emissary, Omar Shalhi, to London and to Washington with a royal message. It is not really clear how seriously intent the 80-year-old King is to return to his throne, but he has apparently allowed his emissary to ask for appointments with Prime Minister Wilson and the President.

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feel that our best hope at the moment of safeguarding our interests in Wheelus Air Base and the oilfields is to avoid any move likely to provoke the new regime into action against our installations. We have instructed our Embassy and military authorities in Libya accordingly.

The balance we and the British are trying to maintain is a difficult one. The new regime has already won Egyptian and Iraqi

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expressions of approval, although broadcasts from the radical Arab countries are following a fairly cautious line. Supporters of the King are looking to the United Kingdom and the United States for support

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Our best estimate, which the British seem to share, is that the coup is essentially due to internal factors. The coup leaders, however, have also set out their program in a vocabulary similar to that used by nationalist military juntas elsewhere in the Middle East.

Our representatives in Libya are still keeping a watchful eye on the safety of Americans in Libya, who are being kept off the streets and at home.

We feel in conclusion that we should avoid any overt intervention and allow the political issues to be played out within an internal Libyan framework. There is not yet any sign of counterrevolutionary leadership in the country; this however might well develop and is a reason for our keeping our options open.

for

Theodore L. Eliot, Jr.
Executive Secretary

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AF - Mr. Newsom
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